

Medal of Honor winner Loring's story told

By Tech. Sgt. Niklaas Waller
8th Fighter Wing history office

On Nov. 22, 1952, Maj. Charles Loring Jr. and three other pilots from the 80th Fighter-Bomber Squadron took off from Suwon Air Base, Korea, and flew their F-80s northeast toward the town of Kumhwa. Their mission for the day was to fly ground attack against artillery positions.

When the four Shooting Stars arrived on station, Loring, the flight lead, checked in with the forward air controller for target assignments. After receiving approval from ground control, the FAC, 1st Lt. Thomas Crawford Jr., directed the four aircraft to drop their bombs on a Chinese artillery position firing on friendly forces.

After Crawford marked the target with a smoke rocket fired from his T-6 Mosquito, Loring rolled in on his bomb run.

Intense enemy flak filled the sky as Loring dove toward his target. Despite the heavy barrage, he pressed on. At about 4,000 feet Loring's aircraft sus-

tained a direct hit from an enemy gun. Loring altered his course 45 degrees to the left, and aimed his mortally-wounded F-80 at another active gun position northeast of the original target.

As the FAC turned to check the results of Loring's bomb run he saw a huge explosion reaching 500 feet into the sky. But the explosion was 1,000 yards away from the assigned target. The FAC called the flight lead and reported the largest secondary explosions he had ever seen, but he did not answer. Before the FAC could call again, the second F-80 rolled in and requested a target for his bombs. The third fighter followed.

After the third fighter dropped its bombs, Crawford returned to the target area to assess the effectiveness of the strikes. As he passed over the area, heavy flak exploded around him. He saw that the first pass, Loring's attack, had blackened an area 100 yards in diameter – it was still burning. The second and third runs had knocked out two artillery positions. The FAC called the flight lead to relay his strike assessment; but as before, Loring did not answer. The third aircraft (the second in command) called Loring as well, to no avail.

The second F-80 pilot then reported that he thought Loring went in on his pass.

All present then understood what had happened. Under the cover of one of the F-80s, the FAC returned to the target. As he circled the burned out area, he saw two destroyed artillery bunkers. Near the edge of the target he caught sight of a piece of shiny aluminum measuring 15 feet long and 5 feet wide.

Crawford called the number three pilot and said there was no way the flight lead could have possibly gotten out of the aircraft. Loring plunged his aircraft straight into the enemy – his bombs still hanging on the wings.

Elsie Loring, the major's wife, received his Medal of Honor in 1954.

Charles Loring had a special understanding of the challenges faced by infantrymen. He once said, "I've got a soft spot in my heart for the infantry. I would do anything for them." On Nov. 22, 1952, he did all he could for the infantrymen suffering under the fire of the enemy guns. Maj. Charles Loring, Jr. gave the ultimate sacrifice – his life.

Valorous Deeds – Native Americans show courage in battle

By Capt. Daniel Zeidler
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Military Equal Opportunity

November is Native American Heritage Month, a time we bring to light all the contributions Native Americans have made to our culture, nation and military. We have all heard of the U.S. Marine Corps Navajo Code Talkers and the contributions they made during World War II. Here is a brief look at five Native Americans, American servicemen like you and I, whose valorous deeds earned them our nation's highest military honor: the Medal of Honor.

✧ Jack Montgomery – A Cherokee from Oklahoma and a 1st Lieutenant with the 45th Infantry Division Thunderbirds. On Feb. 22, 1944, near Padiglione, Italy,

Montgomery's rifle platoon was under fire by three echelons of enemy forces, when he single-handedly attacked all three positions, taking prisoners in the process. As a result of his courage, Montgomery's actions demoralized the enemy and inspired his men to defeat the Axis troops.

✧ Ernest Childers – A Creek from Oklahoma and a 1st Lieutenant with the 45th Infantry Division. Childers received the Medal of Honor for heroic action in 1943 when, up against machine gun fire, he and eight men charged the enemy. Although suffering a broken foot in the assault, Childers ordered covering fire and advanced up the hill, single-handedly killing two snipers, silencing two machine gun nests, and capturing a mortar observer.

✧ Van Barfoot – A Choctaw from Mississippi and a 2nd lieutenant in the Thunderbirds. On May 23, 1944, during the breakout from Anzio to Rome, Barfoot knocked out two machine gun nests and captured 17 German soldiers. Later that same day, he repelled a German tank assault, destroyed a Nazi fieldpiece and while returning to camp, carried two wounded commanders to safety.

✧ Mitchell Red Cloud Jr. – A Winnebago from Wisconsin and a corporal in Company E., 19th Infantry Regiment in Korea. On Nov. 5, 1950, Red Cloud was on a ridge guarding his company command post when he was surprised by Chinese communist forces. He sounded the alarm and stayed in his position firing his automatic rifle and point-blank

to check the assault. This gave his company time to consolidate their defenses.

After being severely wounded by enemy fire, he refused assistance and continued firing upon the enemy until he was fatally wounded. His heroic action prevented the enemy from overrunning his company's position and gained time for evacuation of the wounded.

✧ Charles George – A Cherokee from North Carolina and private 1st class in Korea, was killed on Nov. 30, 1952. During battle, George threw himself upon a grenade and smothered it with his body. In doing so, he sacrificed his own life but saved the lives of his comrades. For this brave and selfless act, George was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1954.

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